Socialist Worker

Major and Tories gamble with peace

John Major and the BritishTory government are playing poker with peace In Ireland.

They know that they are hated and despised in their own country. Their main hope of survival is a deal with the Official Unionists.

But the Unionists also want concessions from Major on any new arrangements for Northern Ireland. And now they are getting them with Major's agreement to an elected assembly.

This sort of election would have nothing to do with democracy.

- It would be the signal for an hysterical sectarian campaign where Trimble would use the 'constitutional issue' to get rid of any dissent in Protestant working class areas.
- It would rule out any discussion of the social and economic issues that unite working class people across the sectarian divide.
- And it would help the Unionist Party and the DUP to strengthen their claim to a full return to Stormont in the near future.

The plans of Trimble and Major could, however, be stopped very quickly.

If Sinn Fein and the SDLP matched their verbal opposition to this Assembly with a clear pledge to boycott it, the whole proposal would be shown up for the farce that it is.

Their slowness to commit themselves to a boycott is only encouraging the sectarian bigots in the Official Unionist Party.

HOW HAVE WE GOT TO HERE?

It is now nearly a year and a half since the ceasefire and the question that many ask is: how come we are getting nowhere? The reality is that the strategy adopted by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness has been a failure.

They were right to argue for an end to the armed campaign.

After 25 years it had become counter-productive and was driving a deeper wedge between Catholic and Protestant workers. A return to it now would be an act of desperation that would give Major and Bruton a clear hand to introduce massive repression.

The problem was that the republican leadership sought to replace the armed struggle with a strategy of winning friends in the establishment. They thought that if they dropped any radicalism the leaders of 'nationalist Ireland' and the right wing Irish American politicians would help remedy injustice.

They forgot that while a millionaire like Albert Reynolds might like to wrap himself in the Green flag he has nothing in common with working class people in Derry or Belfast who have borne the brunt of sectarianism and oppression.

And while we were all being lined up like stage Irishmen for Bill Clinton's election campaign did anyone not think to ask: How could Clington really help fight discrimination when his own state and police is so busy oppressing black people in the US? The terrible lesson of the last year is that the more you crawl to the establishment, the more they treat you with contempt.

AN ALTERNATIVE

We desperately need a change of direction. As long as the struggle for justice is confined to one 'community', it is going to be hard to win.

We should continue to demand the disbandment of the RUC, the removal of the British Army, and the break-up of this sectarian state.

But it is vital that the class issues that affect both Protestant and Catholic workers are now stressed. Today the Tories are nakedly using sectarian divisions to close hospitals or run down services. All the time, they set up the issue as: which community should win or lose on getting investment or accepting job losses? But when it comes to fighting poverty wages or ending unemployment, we have far more in common with Protestant workers than all that divides us.

Instead of looking to Clinton or the Southern government we should see our fight as part of a wider battle against capitalism and imperialism.

We should be making it clear that the United Ireland we want is one that will involve overthrowing the rotten regime in the South which co-operated with partition and attacked its own working class.

It is only in the fight for a socialist Ireland, that all workers ,Catholic and Protestant, North and South, will see that they have something to gain.

Socialist Worker Public Meeting

Is socialism in Ireland possible?

Speaker: Moira Morton (Belfast SWP)

Tues 30th January 8.00pm

Badgers Bar, (Near Foyle side)

Join the Socialist Workers Party

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